



Newsletter 4

Spring 2012

The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery, c/o 100 Enbourne Road, Newbury, RG14 6AN
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Chairman's Chatter

Brian Sylvester

Hello Friends

What a strange Spring we're having this year: it doesn't seem quite sure what it wants to do. I have to admit it is my favourite season what with the frequent blue skies, the spring flowers and the light green of the shooting foliage. A new season, a feeling of well-being, and the prospect of summer just around the corner.

And the Newtown Road Cemetery is looking particularly attractive right now. Newbury Town Council have done splendid work: some may say too much but there's been years of neglect and this has to be remedied before we can move on. Best advice has been sought from the West Berkshire Tree Officer to ensure the future health of our collection.



Those who have visited recently will have seen the new benches, the bins and the work being carried out to install electricity in the Chapel. The last is particularly appreciated as it means the building can be lit as well as dried out properly. The Council has reseeded the area dug for the cable and your co-operation in avoiding this space for the time being would be appreciated.

Dogs are welcome in the cemetery but owners should keep them on a lead to avoid disturbing the natural scene, please, and do use the newly-installed dog bin.

Elsewhere you'll see a notice of our forthcoming OPEN DAY on 31st March. Do come along for that and, if you can possibly help, please contact Ros Clow. Let's not leave it all to the same small group of willing, but stretched volunteers.

JANE BURRELL has helped to spread the word about the cemetery by talks at two (yes two!) meetings of The Newbury District Field Club. Thank you Jane- much appreciated.

Sadly I have to report the resignation of our Schools' Liaison Officer, HILARY KONYA. She has done sterling work in the preparation for future school visits which will add considerably to the learning programme. However, Hilary feels that with her Open University study commitments, she must now step down from this role. Many thanks for all you've done Hilary. Any volunteers, ideally with school teaching experience, to take on the mantle out there?

Elsewhere you will find reports from the subgroups of Friends. They are all doing splendid work and, along with your committee, are to be congratulated.

I hope to see as many of you as possible on 31st.

Best wishes

Brian

Chairman.

History Research Group

Ros Clow

The Friends' History Group meets every couple of months, attended by about 12 members. Meetings are informal and we all update each other on our most recent findings. So far we have researched more than 450 individuals through local contacts, death and birth certificates, Newbury Weekly News articles, obituaries and funeral reports.

Recently the British Library has put thousands of newspapers on-line and this has allowed us to track down some of our residents before they arrived in Newbury or after they left. Reading Mercury is one of the newspapers available and that has resulted in our finding out more about the early days of the cemetery, for instance the dedication ceremony for the Dissenters Chapel.

Brian Sylvester has been busy finding out about Mayors and Masons and to support that organised a visit to the Newbury Masonic Centre during which he presented us with a history of Masonic rituals and identified those Masons now resident in NRC.

Ros Clow is writing monologues based on individuals: so far Sarah Louisa Hopson (whose illegitimate baby was born and died in Newbury Workhouse) and Herbert and Margaret Finn

(who ran the Phoenix Brewery). Later in the year there will be a new cemetery tour 'Angels, Authors and Artists'.

Visit to the Newbury Masonic Centre

Maureen Hudd

On February 15th, a goodly group of Friends plus their friends and spouses enjoyed an informative and convivial evening as guests of Newbury Masonic Centre. We met by kind invitation of Berkshire Funeral Directors for a sherry reception and then crossed the road to the Masonic Centre.

Brian Sylvester gave a fascinating talk about the origins of Masonry from its beginnings in the middle ages and of the way Masons have grown and are still growing today. We were given an insight into the charitable works of Masons which results in huge sums being raised for international, national and local charities.

Brian then moved on to talk about some of the Masons who 'reside' in Newtown Road Cemetery and illustrated this with pictures of the gentlemen who in the past have served Newbury as Mayors, Town Councillors and in the wider field of public service.

We were then encouraged to walk around the Centre and ask questions about the Centre itself and some of the regalia on show in the entrance hall.

Our thanks to the Newbury Masonic Centre for their warm welcome and for making Masonry less of a mystery to us.

Diary Dates

A few upcoming dates for your diary:

March 31st

Cemetery Open Day

10am – 3pm. Find-a-grave sessions available from 11-2 and tours from 10.30 until 3pm. The chapel will be open throughout the day.

May 30th

History Group Meeting

Contact Ros Clow for more details

June 10th

Cemetery Open Day

Aerial photograph of the cemetery

Paul Thompson

We have obtained an aerial photograph of the cemetery from English heritage taken in 1950. We have been given permission to use this picture here and on our website, so here it is. The version on the website is a dynamic one enabling you to zoom in on a particular area within the limitations of the original image.

In the picture you can see the dissenter's chapel in the foreground which shortly afterwards was demolished. We are still trying to find out what actually happened to it, so if anyone can help us with this matter, we would be very grateful. You can also see the temporary building that was used for St. John's Church following the destruction of the original church in 1943 when Newbury was bombed.



© English Heritage. NMR RAF Photography

The Friends' Website

Paul Thompson

Our website has had a bit of a facelift. We have tried to add a few more features including tidying up the pages of historical information on individuals buried in the cemetery. The new design also makes it easier for others on the committee to add articles and information to

the site without needing to pass it to me, so Ros can add history group research and Brian can post articles and pictures as required as chairman.

We now have digital copies of the large cemetery maps and are painstakingly piecing them together to make one big map of the cemetery which will be available soon.

If anyone would like to suggest further changes or additions, please let me know by e-mailing me at webmaster@fnrcnewbury.org.uk.

Mission in France

Ros Clow

As I arrived to give a guided tour of the cemetery on Discover Newbury Weekend I spied a man leaving the cemetery clutching a small saw. Of course I challenged him. He told me that whenever the cemetery is open he comes to tidy up a family grave which has an elder bush growing against it. He showed me the grave and in particular the back of the gravestone which has a war memorial on it for William Shadwell Luke who died in WW1 in Camiers, France.

He had never visited the Commonwealth War Grave (CWG) but he



knew exactly where it was. "I'm off to Pays de Calais on Monday, maybe I could find it"

I joked. One hour later Jim returned with the CWG documentation showing that William was no longer buried in Camiers but had been moved to the massive British cemetery at Etaples. He had the plot, row and grave number and as luck would have it Etaples was about 12 miles from where we were staying. It is the largest Commission cemetery in France, designed by Edwin Lutyens.

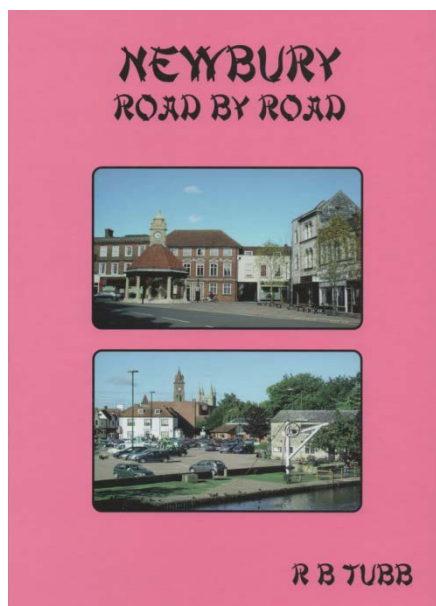


Once we had found the cemetery it took less than five minutes to find the grave and take our photos. Jim was in contact again to thank Friends for laying a poppy on WS Luke's grave for Remembrance weekend so we were able to give him these photos of the Etaples CWG cemetery.

Book Review

Brian Sylvester

"Newbury Road by Road" by R.B. Tubb



Anyone with an interest in local history should not fail to get their hands on this splendid volume because it does exactly what its title suggests, giving an invaluable insight into the history and naming of our local streets. The reader will encounter street names of Newbury long since gone, such as Laundry Road, Sandy Lane and Gas House Road.

And be assured it's well laid out in a relaxed style, it's in alphabetical order and boasts a superb index: it will soon have you hooked.

Mr. Tubb said that the book took him about nine years, on and off, to write it (we're not surprised!). He added that information for the book has come not only from

Newbury (library and museum), Reading (Berkshire Record Office) and over 250 local people but also from places much further afield, such as Aberdeen, Cardiff, Chester, Salisbury and Taunton.

It must have been a painstaking and, at times, frustrating undertaking but the outcome has been well worth it.

And for the Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery there is an added bonus for he has included references and details of local families, many of whom became "our residents". And he has already given us permission to use his excellent research on Dr Heywood pp137-8.

It is a hardback and has 324 pages, packed with fascinating information: at £16 it is excellent value for money.

Do support our local talent and historians, and take part in preserving our local past for the future.

Copies may be obtained from:

- Jackie's Store in Blenheim Road
- Waterstones in Northbrook Street
- The Town Hall (Council Chamber) on Saturday mornings
- The Family Bookshop, Thatcham Broadway
- By contacting Roy himself on 867105.